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Proposed Social Studies Standards Only Enhance Existing Problems in New Mexico Schools (and how you can fight back)

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December 2021

Recently, concerned New Mexicans gathered at our state capitol and met in a NMPED zoom session to speak out against the blatant incorporation of critical race theory (CRT), anti-American sentiment, and sexuality into New Mexico's K-12 social studies standards. Opponents of the proposed "Ethnic, cultural, and identity" standards have every right to be alarmed.

If adopted, these standards would mandate that teachers spend about one fifth of social studies instruction time focusing on racial tensions and teaching hostility toward traditional American economic, government, and social institutions falsely presented as the cause of systemic injustice.¹ To allow such destructive indoctrination into our public schools when students should be learning the richness of American history and the principles of our unique limited constitutional government is unconscionable.

New Mexicans should reject the proposed social studies standards outright as unpatriotic and immoral. At the same time, to preserve the status quo of New Mexico's education standards is to miss the smoldering forest while putting out a flaming tree. CRT and anti-American sentiment are already pervasive in New Mexico's K-12 standards and have been at least since 2010 when our legislature blindly adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).²

CCSS are labeled and touted as English Language Arts (ELA) and Math Standards with no mention of national history standards, which proved unpalatable to Americans during the first Bush administration due to fear of nationwide political indoctrination. Deviously, the CCSS in ELA include standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies as well as Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects. Together, these standards consume much of the seat time in public schools and make way for the propagandization Americans thirty years ago would not tolerate.

Leftist ideology is pervasive in the common core document, but strategically not forefront. After all, the authors knew the standards required some level of approval of bipartisan state legislatures, even if they would be rammed through sight unseen with carrots and sticks and then

¹ There are six major strands of standards per grade in Social Studies. The last strand is "Inquiry" which focusses on skills as opposed to content within the curriculum. See NMAC Title 6, Chapter 29 Part 11.

² <http://www.corestandards.org/standards-in-your-state/>

subsequently rubberstamped with very little time for review.³ The standards themselves are a sea of redundant, ambiguous phrases from the educationese lexicon about skills that make little reference to actual subject matter. The left-wing agenda is explicit primarily in the appendices which dictate criteria for reading content.

In Appendix A and B, the veils of text “complexity” and “range” of publication date and authorship are used to justify inundating the curriculum with politically charged articles on current events, second-hand critical analyses of our Nation’s founders, and written works by modern authors and authors of diverse backgrounds. Here are some examples of “model texts” according to the authors of common core:

FedViews by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (2009)⁴

“The Cost Conundrum: Health Care Costs in McAllen, Texas” in the June 1, 2009 edition of *The New Yorker* by Atul Gawande⁵

2007 “Executive Order 13423: Strengthening Federal Environmental, Energy, and Transportation Management⁶

Akhil Reed Amar’s *America’s Constitution: A Biography*⁷

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*; Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*; Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*; Alice Walker, “Women”; Jorge Luis Borges, “The Garden of Forking Paths”; Christina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban*; Rudolfo Anaya, “Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry.”

The problem with Common Core is not a few charged articles or novels by diverse authors. Indeed, some of the latter may prove great in the test of time. The problem is the introduction of many such readings into the curriculum that at the same time supplant genuine literary classics and original documents essential to a proper understanding of human nature, morality, and our heritage, Constitution, and way of life as Americans. Indeed, 81% of the 301 exemplar texts in Appendix B are written in the 20th and 21st centuries and 91% in grades K-5.⁸

The message to teachers is clear. An article on the costs of health care published when Obamacare was being debated merits a place in the curriculum over an excerpt from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*. An environmentalist’s executive order merits a place over the creation story in Genesis.⁹ A Yale politics professor’s opinion of the apportionment clause using the words “vicious,” “master class,” “camouflaged,” and “ugly” in relation to the Constitution

³ <https://www.kanw.com/post/weekly-standard-president-cheats-school-reform>
https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/us-to-grant-waivers-for-no-child-left-behind/2011/08/05/gIQA52ra1I_story.html?hpid=z4
<https://truthinamericaneducation.com/race-to-the-top/>

⁴ “Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: Appendix B,” 177-178.

⁵ Ibid, 183.

⁶ Ibid, 181.

⁷ Ibid, 176.

⁸ Elkins, T. (2016) A Critical Analysis of the Moral and Political Education of Common Core in light of the American Founding (Master’s Thesis, Hillsdale College, 2016) 52-53.

⁹ Genesis 1:28.

and our Founders merits a place over Lincoln's interpretation of the clause in the seventh Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Moreover, students should read modern and diverse authors in every grade instead of following a coherent literature curriculum arranged by time-period or theme. Thereby, they should be steeped in the bleak, self-critical, anti-war sentiment, and alienation of the 20th century and postmodern world without first being immersed in ancient authors and the great human themes of honor, duty, glory, country, and goodness as an antidote. In general, modern texts that impose on students a postmodern, multicultural, and anti-American view of the world are to replace the generally accepted canon of great literature in our K-12 curriculum.

The result of such a curriculum has been and continues to be the cultivation of citizens who evaluate people based on race and gender as opposed to merit and who accept political inequalities to the extent that they benefit those labeled as "victims" in our society. This includes instilling a mindset that respects and celebrates diverse cultures and perspectives and rejects the essential goodness of America, her traditions, and founding principles.

Early in our history Benjamin Franklin wrote that the intention of education should be to cultivate in young people an inclination and ability to serve mankind, their friends and family, country, and God. He said that this requires that young people be taught to have a general goodwill toward *all* people.¹⁰ New Mexico's status quo educational standards under common core turn this principle on its head as much as the newly proposed social studies standards. If New Mexicans do not rally to reject both, we will have a generation who learned to have good will only toward specific groups of people considered less privileged and antipathy toward groups considered more privileged. No doubt, they will have no respect for Benjamin Franklin.

So, what can concerned New Mexicans do? The NMPED would have us believe that we can do nothing, especially once the standards are adopted, except fall in line and implement the new mandate. Indeed, the PED's terse response to the frequently asked question "What options will local school boards/school districts have to reject any standard(s) that do not meet community needs or concerns?" is that the standards will become legal code: "The Social Studies Standards, once the Rule approval process has taken place-including a 30 day public comment period, will be codified under NMAC 6.29.11 and will continue to be mandated for students in grades k-12."¹¹

Unfortunately, like most bureaucratic processes, the process of editing and adopting the standards is unclear and unaccountable. A recent KRQE article says that "Once public comment is complete, NMPED will edit the social studies draft accordingly. The new standards will then be implemented in the fall of 2023."¹² The problem is that the timeline of adoption on the NMPED website does not explain how this final editing process occurs or who, if anyone reviews the final product before the standards become legal code.

¹⁰ Benjamin Franklin, "Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania," in Benjamin Franklin: Writings, ed. Joseph A. Leo J. A. Leo Lemay (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1987), 342.

¹¹ <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/literacy-humanities/social-studies/social-studies-standards-faq/>

¹² <https://www.krqe.com/news/education/critical-race-theory-will-not-be-included-in-new-social-studies-standards/>

In this information vacuum, one hopes that the legislature has the final say on the standards. This does not appear to be the case. According to the NMPED website: “The department has not received any request to brief the legislative education committee on the new standards.”¹³ It seems, our elected officials have delegated their authority and that this department of unelected bureaucrats presumes they have unilateral authority to have the final say about what *our* children learn in *our* taxpayer funded classrooms.

Despite the presumption on the part of our overreaching government, there are things we as concerned citizens, parents, school board members, school leaders, and teachers can do in response to ugly educational standards. First, become informed and stay informed about what is happening in our classrooms. Take time to read the social studies standards and some good resources on Common Core. *The Story-Killers: A Common-Sense Case Against the Common Core* by Terrence Moore and *The Education Invasion: How Common Core Fights Parents for Control of American Kids* by Joy Pullman are very worthwhile. Also, talk to students and get into the classroom. It is tough, but not impossible to visit public schools and sit in on classes. Observe for yourself what is happening and be prepared to speak about it to folks who can do something about it – lawmakers, school board members, school leaders, and teachers.

Lawmakers must stop delegating their authority to bureaucrats that citizens cannot hold accountable. Lawmakers must do the hard work of researching and understanding academic standards and then make hard decisions regarding whether the state should have standards at all, and if so, determine the content that merits the precious and expensive time our students spend in school.

School board members can hire superintendents who think independently and are willing to do what is good or fitting for the schools in their community, even when it goes against out of touch top-down state mandates. Specifically, school boards can look for superintendents who believe that teachers should have the freedom and support to choose what and how to teach students. Superintendents can in turn hire school leaders who do as well. School board members can also pay careful attention to the kind of funding they approve. Are boards funding the teaching of CRT through an outside contractor or by purchasing a district-wide program? Vote “No!”¹⁴

Parents can engage with school leaders and teachers to ensure that their children are not taught political or moral views blatantly contrary to their own. Moreover, parents can make sure their students are learning robust academic content in the key subject areas by asking teachers questions. What books are my children reading in literature? What lessons have they learned in history? Do they read original sources or only secondary sources? Are the secondary sources balanced or credible? What is your approach to cultivating virtue in your students?

Teachers can guard jealously their time with our students and prioritize the content that best serves to shape the hearts and minds of our students. They can encourage students through story and instruction to evaluate people based on character as opposed to arbitrary categories such as socio-economic background and race. They can teach real history in original sources which bears

¹³ <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/literacy-humanities/social-studies/social-studies-standards-faq/>

¹⁴ [NM Stat § 22-5-4.N \(2018\)](#)

the fact that America, despite her shortcomings, is exceptional in the world for her devotion to the principles of liberty and justice for all.

Teachers can temper tendencies toward radical and dangerous ideologies by reminding students that America does not have to be perfect to be good, and our Nation is far better than the alternatives. Indeed, teachers can show students that they have much to be proud of in their heritage as Americans and that we have much to lose in rejecting the founding principles that provide the free and prosperous way of life we enjoy.

The ambitious who wish to counter the anti-American indoctrination in New Mexico's schools head on can partner with initiatives such as Hillsdale College's Barney Charter School Initiative and the 1776 Curriculum project to bring much-needed insight and educational opportunity to our state.¹⁵

About the Author

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¹⁵ <https://k12.hillsdale.edu/a>
<https://k12.hillsdale.edu/Curriculum/The-Hillsdale-1776-Curriculum/>